

Message Text

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NODIS

FOR AMB SCHAUFLE FROM WISNER

DEPT PASS LONDON FOR SEITZ

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PFOR RH UK

SUBJ: RHODESIA CONFERENCE: DEC 7 UK CONSULTATIONS

1. THE BRITISH MET WITH THE THREE NATIONALISTS DELEGATIONS DURING THE COURSE OF THE DAY, PRINCIPALLY TO FILL IN TIME WHILE RICHARD IS IN LONDON AND TO GIVE THE APPEARANCE THAT NEGOTIATIONS ARE CONTINUING.

2. THE RHODESIANS DECLINED TO MEET THE BRITISH SINCE THEY ARE AWAITING SMITH'S ARRIVAL TO DECIDE WHAT POSTURE TO ADOPT.

3. TWO SUBJECTS OCCUPIED THE CONSULTATIONS. FIRST, WITH EACH DELEGATION THE BRITISH DISCUSSED THE CONSTITUTIONAL DRAFTING COMMISSION. THE PATRIOTIC FRONT REGARDS THE COMMISSION AS A POLITICAL BODY WHICH WOULD WORK UNDER THE DIRECT SUPERVISION OF THE CHIEF MINISTER. THE MUZOREWA AND SITHOLE DELEGATIONS ARE THINKING PRINCIPALLY IN THE TERMS OF A TECHNICAL BODY OF EXPERTS. MUZOREWA AND SHITHOLE'S REPRESENTATIVE ARGUED FOR A REFERENDUM WHICH WOULD LEGALIZE THE CONSTITUTION. THE BRITISH POINTED OUT THAT THERE MIGHT NOT BE TIME FOR A REFERENDUM AND THAT A NO-VOTE WOULD BE LIKELY. NKOMO, TRYING TO LIVE DOWN HIS ANTI-DEMOCRATIC IMAGE,

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ALSO SUGGESTED A REFERENDUM BUT WAS CLEARLY WORRIED

THAT THERE WOULD NOT BE TIME TO HOLD A REFERENDUM AS WELL AS CONDUCT ELECTIONS FOR A MAJORITY RULE GOVERNMENT. THE BRITISH ROLE IN DRAFTING THE CONSTITUTION WAS BARELY DISCUSSED. MUZOREWA AND SITHOLE'S REPRESENTATIVE REFERRED IN PASSING TO THE POSSIBILITY OF BRITISH AND COMMONWEALTH LAWYERS PLAYING A PART. SECOND, HENRY STEEL BRIEFED EACH OF THE DELEGATIONS ON THE QUESTION OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS IN THE LIFE OF THE TRANSITIONAL GOVERNMENT. HE DESCRIBED HOW THE BRITISH HAD DELEGATED CERTAIN FOREIGN AFFAIRS RESPONSIBILITIES TO THE OLD SOUTHERN RHODESIAN GOVERNMENT WHICH IN TURN HAD PASSED THESE TO THE CENTRAL AFRICAN FEDERATION. WHEN THE FEDERATION BROKE UP, THESE AUTHORITIES REVERTED TO SALISBURY. STEEL URGED THE DELEGATIONS TO CONSIDER HOW THEY WOULD ORGANIZE EXTERNAL AFFAIRS RESPONSIBILITIES WITHIN THE TRANSITIONAL GOVERNMENT AND POINTED OUT THAT IN SOME AREAS THE DESIRES OF THE TRANSITIONAL GOVERNMENT MIGHT BE IN CONFLICT WITH THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT'S COMMITMENTS. STEEL HAD IN MIND INTERNATIONAL CIVIL AVIATION AND COMMERCIAL AGREEMENTS AND THE LIKE. THE PATRIOTIC FRONT EXPRESSED RESERVATIONS ABOUT THE ROLE WHICH BRITAIN WOULD PLAY ON THE GOVERNMENT'S BEHALF AND HINTED THAT THEY WERE CONCERNED THE BRITISH WERE RESERVING EXTENSIVE AUTHORITY UNDER THE FOREIGN AFFAIRS RUBRIC. BY THE END OF THE MEETING, NKOMO AND MUGABE SEEMED SATISFIED THE BRITISH HAD NO SUCH PLAN IN MIND.

4. WITH MUZOREWA THE BRITISH DISCUSSED BRIEFLY HOW ELECTIONS COULD BE HELD UNDER HIS PROPOSAL THAT THE PRIME MINISTER FOR THE INTERIM GOVERNMENT BE ELECTED. IN ADDITION TO OTHER ASPECTS OF THIS PROBLEM, THE BRITISH ASKED MUZOREWA HOW THE FREEDOM FIGHTERS WOULD VOTE. MUZOREWA REFERRED TO THE POSSIBILITY OF POLLING BOOTHS IN THE CAMPS.

5. COMMENT: THE CONSULTATIONS WERE NEITHER CONCLUSIVE NOR SIGNIFICANT. THE CONFERENCE IS IN A STATE OF SUSPENSION. THE RHODESIANS ARE WAITING FOR SMITH; THE BRITISH ARE WAITING FOR NEW GUIDANCE FROM LONDON

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AND THE NATIONALISTS ARE WAITING FOR BOTH. RICHARD RETURNS TO GENEVA THE MORNING OF DECEMBER 8. CATTO

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